

History of the NZ Society of Diversional Therapists

During 1989 and 1990, various Diversional Therapists from Waikato, Rotorua and Tauranga areas met for discussions to consider how Diversional Therapists “Fitted” into the system of providing motivational and recreational activities for people (particularly elderly people) who were in care. This resulted in a special meeting being called in June 1992 at the Waiariki Polytechnic, Rotorua. Thirty-one people attended.

Two proposals were presented:

- ◆ That an Incorporated Society be formed to work towards promoting the interests of Diversional Therapists.
- ◆ That a training course be established to provide a recognised qualification for Diversional Therapists.

It was felt that taking such a step was needed because it was apparent that there were many people performing the same tasks with and for the clients but many held different titles, different job descriptions, received different treatment and acknowledgement in their work places and generally were uncertain as to how best to direct their efforts.

The proposals were accepted and this resulted in the *New Zealand Society of Diversional Therapists* becoming officially registered on the **18th September 1992** as an Incorporated Society under the Incorporated Societies Act 1908.

Strong support from the Manawatu Polytechnic and tutor Judith Beaver resulted in a forum convened in Palmerston North in late September 1992. From this, a steering committee was formed with the purpose of developing a National Body with representation on that body being sought from all regions.

The first National Seminar and AGM was held in Hamilton on 27th February 1993. At this seminar, our first Membership Badge was presented. This badge’s interpretation was:

We Strive...

- ◆ **For better quality of life for clients.**
- ◆ **For our own satisfaction of a job done to the best of our abilities.**
- ◆ **To constantly improve on what we have done.**

Rays of the Sun

- ◆ **We try to spread “sunshine.”**

Tree Branches

- ◆ **We provide an umbrella for all to shelter under.**

The Roots

- ◆ **We are influenced by our roots, where we have come from and what we have done... we also need to recognise where our clients have come from and what they have done.**

An important task for the Executive Committee elected at this seminar was to form an Advisory Group of selected Health Professionals representing all areas of the industry, as required by the NZ Qualifications Authority. The purpose of this group was to lead the development of a National Training Course. This group first met in December 1993.

The Executive Committee also established a National quarterly newsletter for distribution to all members. This newsletter was intended to keep members informed of developments within the Society as well as news of activities and events from regional support groups.

At this point, a definition of **Diversional Therapy** was written.

“Diversional Therapy is a professional practice which recognises and facilitates purposeful recreational leisure and pleasure activities with individual client choice to increase the physical, intellectual, spiritual and emotional well-being of older people in supportive environments.”

As of July 2008 the current Philosophy and definition Diversional Therapy by the NZSDT is;

As a professional practice, the Diversional Therapist will recognise and facilitate purposeful recreational leisure activities with individual client choice to increase the physical, intellectual, psychological, cultural, spiritual, sexual and emotional well being of all people in supportive environments’.

During February and March of 1994 and 1995, seminars were again held in Hamilton. As a result of these seminars and with the continuing work of the Executive members, 1995 brought some significant changes to the Society.

Many issues were finalised and progress was made towards establishing the professionalism of the Society and increasing awareness of Diversional Therapy.

- Membership forms were formalised.
- A formal letterhead was approved and stationary printed.
- The *Code of Ethics* were approved, written up, printed and sent out to members.
- Publicity brochures and posters were printed and distributed throughout New Zealand.
- The Standards of Practice for Diversional Therapists were finalised
- The NZSDT became a member of “Enhancing Potential” Industry Training Organisation.
- Judy Cooper, President of NZSDT and members of the Executive continued to meet with representatives of Polytechnics and Education Providers to discuss the NZSDT Qualification for Diversional Therapists, and the delivery of the courses.

The Executive Committee reached the decision that the NZSDT should be responsible for an Annual Two Day Conference, to replace the Forum previously arranged by the Manawatu Polytechnic and the annual one day AGM / Seminar conducted by the Society.

The first of these two-day conferences was hosted by Upper Hutt in March 1996.

Of significance at this Conference was the announcement that Official notice had been received from NZQA that the National Certificate of Diversional Therapy was registered on the Qualifications Framework, 20 August 1996.

Also of significance at this Conference:

The following Policies and Procedures were approved by the Executive Committee, 25 August 1996:

- Membership
- National Society’s Responsibility to Members
- Regional Group
- Resource Provision
- General
- Fundraising
- National Newsletter
- Policy and Procedure Review

NZSDT Members Handbook printed, available to members April 1997

Contents:

- The Society’s Philosophy
- NZSDT Role
- Members Policy
- Members Responsibilities
- Membership Information
- The Code of Ethics
- The Standards of Practice of the New Zealand Society of Diversional Therapists
- The Constitution and Rules (These were amended in June 1998 and again in 1999)

By April 2000, the National Certificate of Diversional Therapy had risen from 91 to 121 units at Level Four on the NZQA Framework. Also at this time, our Patron, Judy Cooper, received the CNZM (Companion of the Order) in the Queen's Birthday honours for her services to the elderly and education.

At the 2001 Conference in Wellington it was decided that trainees should be members of the Society for two continuous years before accessing the Qualified Badge and Certificate.

The 2002 Conference in Christchurch saw the following changes:

A contract which was signed between CSSITO, Motivational Therapy, and the Society in June 2001 was re-signed in April 2002.

A 5 Year Strategic Plan for the Society was formulated and accepted by the Executive, December 2001

A Society Website was launched in August 2001, www.diversionaltherapy.org.nz This was later changed to www.diversionaltherapy.net.nz

The Society Philosophy was amended to add the words "Cultural", "Psychosocial" and "Sexual."

The Society Standards of Practice, Standard One had added: "The Diversional Therapist is accountable for ensuring that the physical, intellectual, psychosocial, cultural, spiritual, sexual and emotional needs are met".

The Constitution had a new clause added –

REGISTRATION

9. QUALIFIED BADGE / REGISTRATION

1. The Qualified Badge belongs to the Society and shall be issued when all documentation is received and approved.
2. A Member may be issued with the Qualified Badge, which does not constitute Registration status.
3. Registration of a Qualified Diversional Therapist will be accepted in accordance with the procedure set out in the Registration Handbook which may be subject to change from time to time and will be published.

The Rule Book was numbered accordingly.

A Mission Statement was agreed upon – "To improve the Quality of Life of the People in our care through Diversional Therapy".

Liability Insurance was investigated and approved by the Executive for the Society.

The Society Logo was registered as Copyright for the Society..

A Professional Accountability document was drawn up and accepted by the Executive and distributed to all Members and interested groups.

May 2005 Conference – Wellington

At this Conference the following amendment was made to the Constitution:

- a) A new executive shall be elected at each Annual General Meeting of the Society and shall take office at the conclusion of the meeting.
- (b) Nominations for the executive must be submitted in writing to the Secretary at least six weeks prior to the date of the Annual General Meeting.
- (c) The Secretary shall circulate the list of nominees to the Members four weeks prior to the Annual general Meeting.
- (d) In the event that insufficient nominations are received in writing 6 weeks prior to the annual General Meeting and/or in the event that the persons nominated in writing 6 weeks prior to the meeting do not receive sufficient votes to be elected, nominations may be taken from the floor.

By December 2005, significant changes were being made to our qualification. A report on that review follows:

UPDATE ON QUALIFICATION REVIEW AND TRAINING

The review process is slowly winding down and after months of meetings, emails and phone calls we are coming to a stage where we now have some idea as to what our 'new' qualification will look like and options available to Diversional Therapists. Your Diversional Therapy Standards Setting Team has been working very hard on your behalf, networking, re-writing unit standards and packaging. NZQA requirements have changed considerably since the last review a few years ago, which has made it a whole new ball game.

We hope to be able to publish details of the 'new' Diversional Therapy Certificate in the first newsletter for 2006 and trust that you will all be happy with the changes that have been made, many of which we had no control over. Funding is available for large qualifications like we currently have, but is this best for our candidates? A staircase qualification that's achievable & affordable for all is what we have been working on.

Some of you were, and still are, concerned that the qualification that we fought so hard for many years ago would be down-graded, and with it our unique identity. We can re-assure you that this has been foremost in our minds throughout the review process. Many of our "older" and now past members, fought long and hard to ensure there was a definite separation of your role from that of other workers. However, we also had a responsibility to ensure the packaging of any new qualification equipped you with the skills and knowledge to venture out of aged care if you so desired, and into other exciting areas.

Your "new" qualification will give you more choices and options. During the review process, and even prior to that, it was becoming very obvious that Diversional Therapists were being asked to work in other areas of disability, not only within residential care facilities but also in the community. This was a priority factor in packaging your 'new' qualification.

The increase in people accessing training, the increase in qualified Diversional Therapists applying for registration, the increase in membership of the NZ Society of Diversional Therapists Inc, and the increase in attendees at our National Conference most definitely highlights industry support of your role and your training.

2005 has seen a steady growth of Diversional Therapists working outside aged care facilities. We now have Diversional Therapists in day cares, working in head injury organisations, working with the intellectually disabled, working with the physically disabled, and those with mental health problems. The focus is slowly shifting to the community and we have several Diversional Therapists working in this area.

Support workshops for candidates in training with CSSITO and professional development workshops to support those who are qualified and in training, continue to be much sort after. 2005 has seen over twenty specialist workshops facilitated nationally. Demand has ensured that further workshops, covering identified topics, have already been planned for 2006 and notification of these will be in the next newsletter. Your local Support Groups will also be asked to contribute.

Before the end of the year, all candidates in training will receive a list of Diversional Therapy Support Workshops for your area for 2006. This will also include Human Services Workshops. We also have eleven assessors who are registered to assess a majority of the Support of the Older Person units and the Dementia unit. You will be given contact details of these assessors as well.

From 2005 until now in 2009, the discussions and battles have continued with the aim of ensuring the retention of a meaningful qualification for Diversional Therapists. Those people presently undertaking study to gain the Qualification should understand that this qualification exists in its present form only because of the commitment and dedication of Diversional Therapists who are truly committed to our cause.